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STEREO



MOZART

COMPLETE DANCES & MARCHES

VIENNA MOZART ENSEMBLE
BOSKOVSKY

VOLUME TEN

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FULL FREQUENCY RANGE RECORDING

Mozart COMPLETE DANCES & MARCHES

Vienna Mozart Ensemble · Willi Boskovsky Volume 10

SIDE ONE

BALLET "LES PETITS RIENS", K. 299b (K.A. 10)

1. Overture
2. Largo - Vivo - Andantino - Allegro - Larghetto - Gavotte
3. Adagio - (Gigue) - Gavotte Gracieuse - Pantomime - Passepied
4. Gavotte - Andante

SIDE TWO

BALLET MUSIC FROM "IDOMENEO", K. 367

1. Chaconne - Pas Seul
2. Gavotte - Passacaille
3. Passepied

MARCH FROM "IDOMENEO", K. 206

If only the ten records of Mozart's Complete Dances and Marches could have culminated in a really supreme ballet, a sort of 'Figaro' of the dance. If only Noverre's hopes, expressed in his 'Letters on the Dance' of 1760 about ballet as the painting and speaking of the soul, and the promise of Gluck's great ballet scores, especially his 'Don Juan' of 1761, had been realised in a Mozart masterpiece as most branches of music were. It might so easily have happened, for Mozart loved the dance above all else and had even taken lessons from the great Vestris himself - at the age of eleven. (There can be no doubt about the greatness of Gaetano Vestris, for he himself declared that his century had only produced three men of note - Frederick the Great, Voltaire, and a third whom modesty forbade him to name!). It was an unlucky chance that denied Mozart the opportunity of composing any ballet in the last ten years of his life, and thus allowed the trivial ballet scores of the romantic period to become the founding fathers of ballet as we still suffer it today.

What we have on this record is all the ballet music Mozart wrote, apart from that which occurs, usually vocally, in various operas, and the lost Ballet to 'Ascanio in Alba'. The sketches to 'Le Gelosie del Serraglio' (K.A. 109, 135a), to a ballet K.299c and to a carnival pantomime K.446 (416d) consist only of single-line melodies and the sort of instructions Noverre chuckled over so grimly - "The ballet master will receive a violin part in which is to be read: *Passepied* for games and jokes, *Gavotte* of the Cupids, *Tambourin* and *Rigadoun* of the shepherds, *Staccato* of the devils, Entry of the Greeks and *Chaconne* - here he has his instructions, let him carry out this magnificent and profound programme as best he may!" The *Gavotte* K.300 and 'La Chasse' K.A.103 (320f) which may belong to the Paris ballet music are to be found on records nos. 5 and 9 respectively. What we have on record no.10 then, if not the ballet to end all ballets, is a charming *divertissement* by the 22-year-old Mozart (deliberately playing down to Paris taste) and the magnificent formal dances that were added to 'Idomeneo', Mozart's greatest opera *seria*, in fact his first great opera.

Mozart spent from March to September 1778 in Paris and there wrote eight works for or with orchestra:

1. The Concerto for Flute and Harp
2. A *Scena* for Aloisia Weber
3. The 'Paris' Symphony, including an alternative *Andante*
4. Another Symphony
5. Four pieces for a *Miserere* by Holzbauer
6. A *Scena* for Tenducci with *obbligato* piano and wind
7. A *Sinfonia Concertante* for Flute, Oboe, Horn and Bassoon
8. 12 pieces for the ballet 'Les Petits Riens'.

Of these the first three have survived, the next three are lost without a trace and the last two have come down to us in somewhat dubious copies - indeed it may be that the extant K.A.9 has no connection with Mozart's *Concertante*.

Mozart and the great ballet master and theoretician Jean Georges Noverre (1727-1810) were old friends; the young composer often dined with Noverre in Paris, and hoped to obtain through his influence a commission to write a big opera in the French style. The opera never came about, but Mozart was privileged to write a ballet for Noverre, though he was not actually paid for it. On the 9th of July 1778 Mozart gives his father the sad news of his mother's death; he goes on a little later "about Noverre's ballet I only wrote that he might produce a new one - well, he only needed half a ballet and I wrote the music for it - that is to say, 6 pieces in it would be by others, they consist of a lot of rotten old French airs, the Symphony and Contredanse, 12 pieces in all would be by me. This ballet has already been done 4 times with great

applause - but I shall write nothing more now unless I know in advance what I am to get for it - for this was written only to do Noverre a friendly service".

The first performance was at the *Grand Opéra* at the conclusion of Piccini's 'Le finte gemelle' on the 11th June. Mozart's name appeared nowhere. Next day the *Journal de Paris* described the contents of the ballet: "It consists of three scenes forming separate and almost detached episodes. The first is purely anacreontic: it shows Cupid ensnared and put into a cage, a most agreeable choreography. In it Mlle. Guimard and M. Vestris the Younger employ all the grace and skill the subject allows. The second is a game of blind-man's-buff; M.d'Auberval, whose talent so pleases the public, plays the principal part here. The third is a mischievous prank of Cupid's, who introduces a shepherdess disguised as a shepherd to two other shepherdesses. Mlle. Asselin plays the shepherd, Mlles. Guimard and Allard the shepherdesses. The two shepherdesses fall in love with the supposed shepherd, who, to undeceive them, finally uncovers her bosom. This scene is made very piquant by the intelligence and grace of these three dancers. We should add that at the moment Mlle. Asselin disabuses the two shepherdesses several voices cried 'bis'. The variations which concluded the dancing were much applauded".

The music thereupon disappeared for a century. The copy which came to light in 1872 contains an overture and 20 pieces. All have been published in the New Mozart Complete Edition, since it is not at all certain which pieces are Mozart's. I believe that at least three composers were involved - Mozart, an unknown competent composer and a thoroughly incompetent one. The ballet as we have recorded it, and as it is usually played, falls through its tonalities into three parts, not necessarily corresponding to the three scenes danced in 1778.

The Overture is structurally unique in Mozart's music, for it never really leaves the tonic key, and thus flouts the laws of Sonata Form even in their freest Mannheim interpretation. The scoring is much thicker than that of the Paris Symphony; yet there can be little doubt of the authenticity of this thoroughly Mozartean-sounding little piece. We then ignore the first six pieces, all by Incompetent except no. 5 by Competent whose no. 20 is also omitted.

The first group begins with a *Largo* by Competent. The somewhat uninspired melody, the spacing of the wind chords, the protracted ending, the handling of the *Presto* episode in the middle (to represent Cupid buzzing off?) do not point to Mozart's authorship. The *Vivo* that follows is well written but melodically barren. The *Andantino* passes the test, indeed it recalls the 'Magic Flute', except that here Tamino is answered by a distant flute, as though Pamina had learned to play as well. The 6-bar *Allegro* that rounds off the piece could have been written by almost anybody. The *Larghetto* with the oboe solo has a melody of decidedly Mozartean character, yet the harmonic treatment is rather too naive. The *Gavotte* that follows is delightful. It also appears in the Finale of 'Mozart's Seventh Violin Concerto' (K.271i) supposedly of 1777, though it is hard to say which of the two works is in a position to confer authenticity on the other. The second phrase is an almost exact quotation of the old Czech Christmas carol "Ježíšku, miláčku, já tě budu kolébatí" The octave doubling of the accompanying figure by clarinet and bassoon is certainly not characteristic, but Mozart may have intended a clumsy sound for rustic effect.

The next group opens with an *Adagio* that is not by Mozart: he would have perpetrated neither the tick-tock tune nor the frequent parallel octaves between the viola and the bass. The next piece, a *Gigue*, though not so labelled, is certainly Competent's *chef d'oeuvre* if not by Mozart himself. The drone effect and the hunting calls, though infrequent in

Mozart's music, are delightfully done, and the shape of the melody shows real imagination. The *Gavotte gracieuse* that follows is the loveliest piece of the whole ballet. The *Pantomime* is very sweet, in fact with rather too much of that 18th century drawing-room sweetness which shallow persons tend to attach to Mozart; but of course it is the very thing to accompany shepherdess games. The tiny *Passepied* could be by anybody, including Mozart.

The last group consists of two pieces, a very expressive legato *Gavotte* of undoubted authenticity and a slow March with a touching melody but slightly dubious wind-writing. Adding up the total, we find less than the twelve pieces which we know Mozart wrote. There is no point in pretending that he ever composed thoroughly badly written pieces; yet I have apparently shocked some critics in refusing to accept certain usually accepted compositions in this Series and in the Wind Music as being by Mozart. I am of course motivated by Mozartean piety. Let us therefore piously hope that the autographs of the missing Paris compositions will one day come to light, and meanwhile enjoy as heedlessly as we can the Rococo charm of 'Les Petits Riens'.

We move on only two and a half years to the great music of 'Idomeneo'. The composition and production of the opera was one of Mozart's happiest times, but he wrote on 19th December 1780 "One cannot but be happy to be finally freed of such a great, laborious task . . ." and then on the 30th "Afterwards I shall have the honour of writing a *divertissement* for the opera, for there is to be no separate ballet". On the 18th January "Till now I've been kept busy with those cursed dances - Laus Deo - I have survived it all". The premiere was on the 29th January 1781 in the 'Elector's' new opera house, later to be called the *Residenztheater*. The ballet-master was M. Le Grand. The dances may have been performed at the end of Act 1; they may or may not have been connected with the subject matter of the opera, though if they were, certainly in a formal rather than dramatic way. The formal *divertissement* came down from long before through Lully, Rameau and (on occasions) Gluck, whose influence is very marked indeed, the subject of the opening *Chaconne* being taken straight from the *Chaconne* in 'Iphigénie en Aulide'.

The *Chaconne* and *Pas Seul* etc. which is joined to it form together an immense and powerful work, perhaps Mozart's longest instrumental movement. It is also very varied in its moods, the chief of which is however certainly brilliance and pomp. In the score the names of the dancers are indicated though not the nature of the action of the dances: thus the entire ballet dances at each recurrence of the *Chaconne's* Rondo theme and in the concluding *Più allegro*; each intervening episode is a 'Pas seul de Mad. Falgera', a 'Pas de deux de Mad. Hartig et Mr. Antoine' etc. Mr. Le Grand keeps the best and longest spot for himself. The 'Idomeneo' *Gavotte*, an evergreen melody, came into Mozart's head again when he wrote the *Finale* of the Piano Concerto K.503 in 1786. The *ancien régime* seems to dance out to its nostalgic strains. The *Passacaille* is another Rondo, though less sumptuous than the *Chaconne* and without trumpets and drums. Mozart wrote two versions of some passages. The little *Passepied en rondeau* for Mlle. Redwen is of light orchestration - 2 oboes with strings - and touching simplicity. We have rounded off the music with the great D major March from Act 1, during which Idomeneo's warriors disembark on their return to their native shores.

For the Overture of 'Les Petits Riens', the *Chaconne* and the March the Vienna Mozart Ensemble of 6 First Violins, 4 Seconds, 3 Violas, 3 Cellos and 2 Double-basses was augmented by 2 First Violins, 2 Seconds and a Viola.

ERIK SMITH

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STEREOPHONIC

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Side

1

ZAL 7545
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MOZART: BALLET
"LES PETITS RIENS", K.299b

1. Overture (3.25)
2. Largo—Vivo—Andantino—Allegro—Larghetto—Gavotte (6.15)
3. Adagio—(Gigue)—Gavotte Gracieuse—Pantomime—Passepied (6.20)
4. Gavotte—Andante (4.40)

WILLI BOSKOVSKY

conducting the

VIENNA MOZART ENSEMBLE

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Side

2

ZAL 7546

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**MOZART: BALLET MUSIC from
"IDOMENEO", K.367**

1. Chaconne—Pas seul (14.25) 2. Gavotte—Passacaille (8.35)
3. Passepied (3.05)

**MOZART:
IDOMENEO MARCH, K.206**
(3.00)

WILLI BOSKOVSKY
conducting the
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